



Final Endangered Species Act Listing Determination for Oregon Coast Coho

Jan. 17, 2006

Today's Action

Today the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries Service) announced its final Endangered Species Act (ESA) listing determination for the population of coho salmon along the Oregon coast. NOAA Fisheries Service concluded that listing is **not warranted** for Oregon coast coho salmon, and withdrew its June 2004 proposal to list the population as threatened. This finding concludes the agency's commitment, begun in 2002, to update all of its salmon and steelhead listing determinations, consistent with a 2001 court opinion.

Background

Oregon Coast coho were listed by NOAA Fisheries Service as a threatened species in 1998. In 2001 a federal district court set aside the listing, finding that hatchery stocks determined to be a part of the Oregon coast coho population were improperly excluded from the listing. In response to this ruling and a listing petition, NOAA Fisheries Service initiated a new review of Oregon coast coho.

In June 2004 ESA listing update for the entire West Coast, NOAA Fisheries Service proposed listing five populations as "endangered," and the remaining 22 populations as "threatened." That same action included a proposed "threatened" finding for Oregon coast coho salmon. In June 2005, NOAA Fisheries Service announced its listing determinations for 16 salmon populations, and announced that the final listing determinations for the remaining 11 populations were being extended for six months because of "substantial disagreement regarding the sufficiency or accuracy of available data." In December 2005 the agency announced its final determinations for the 10 steelhead populations under review. Today's final listing determination for Oregon coast coho salmon brings to a close NOAA Fisheries Service's coast-wide review of 27 Pacific salmon and steelhead populations.

The listing determinations and status reviews are based on reports produced in early 2003 by NOAA Fisheries Service's biological review team detailing the biological status of naturally spawning populations and its assessment of the effects of hatchery programs on population viability. The additional comment period for Oregon coast coho salmon allowed NOAA Fisheries Service to fully consider a recent assessment conducted by the State of Oregon evaluating the viability of Oregon coast coho, and the accomplishments of conservation measures under the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds. During the initial and extended comment periods, NOAA Fisheries Service received thousands of public comments and held more than a dozen meetings and hearings to receive input.

Significant Federal and State Cooperative Efforts to Restore & Protect Coastal Coho

- NOAA has provided significant investment with the State of Oregon for research, monitoring, habitat restoration and protection of Oregon coast coho. Between 2000 and 2004, NOAA provided more than \$10 million through the **Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund** to the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, for more than 150 habitat protection, enhancement, research and monitoring projects to improve conditions for coho and other listed species along the Oregon coast.
- The **NOAA Restoration Center** funded \$950,000 between 2001 and 2005 for projects in the five counties (Clatsop, Coos, Lane, Lincoln and Tillamook) in the Oregon coast coho ESU geographical area benefiting coastal coho and other aquatic species. This includes projects funded through NOAA's partnership with the Lower Columbia & Tillamook Estuary Partnerships.
- NOAA provided \$250,000 in federal funds to support Oregon's scientific work necessary to complete the viability assessment of Oregon coast coho.
- The Oregon Plan includes a collaborative effort of \$20-30 million annually for state and local watershed restoration projects. In addition, private forest landowners in Oregon have invested more than \$31 million in forest road and culvert improvements.
- Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife managers have adopted basin fisheries plans that have decreased harvest rates, improved hatchery operations and fish passage and monitoring. According to ODFW, the harvest rate for coastal coho previously was more than 50 percent during the four decades prior to 1994. Over the past eight years, harvest rates have been reduced to between eight and 13 percent.
- During the 1980's, ODFW reports that hatchery coho released in watersheds inhabited by coastal coho often exceeded 20 million smolts annually, many produced by private hatcheries. As a result of major hatchery improvements, hatchery coho releases are less than one million per year, and broodstock selections have been modified to minimize potential adverse ecological and genetic impacts to the coastal coho ESU. Hatchery managers are clipping the adipose fins of all hatchery coho to ensure identification and selective harvest of hatchery fish.
- Through Oregon Plan funds, more than \$25 million has been invested by Oregon entities to replace culverts and improve fish passage in watersheds along the coast. This has resulted in improvement to 1,140 stream crossings and opening of 1,818 stream miles of habitat to native migratory fish.
- Thorough monitoring of coho data following these management changes has increased coastal coho spawning abundance rates by more than 200 percent over the past four years, from 68,966 in 2000 to 222,309 in 2003.

"Not Warranted" Final Listing Determination for Oregon Coast Coho Salmon

In June 2004, NOAA Fisheries Service proposed that the Oregon Coast coho salmon ESU be listed as threatened under the ESA. In June 2005, the listing determination deadline was extended because of public comments received and an assessment by the State of Oregon concluding that the Oregon Coast coho salmon ESU is viable (that is, likely to persist into the foreseeable future under current conditions). After considering the best available scientific and commercial information, NOAA Fisheries Service has concluded that the ESU is not in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range, nor is it likely to become so within the foreseeable future, and that the proposed listing determination is withdrawn.

More information about the status reviews and listing determinations for each of the listings is available at <http://www.nwr.noaa.gov>.